

News Release

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USDA'S FARM SERVICE AGENCY PROVIDES CRITICAL INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC

WASHINGTON, November 25, 1997 -- USDA's Farm Service Agency's (FSA) is working hard to use new technology to keep producers and others aware of program and policy changes via the FSA World Wide Web site, according to FSA Administrator Keith Kelly. FSA now has over 80 pages on its web site -- equivalent to more than 300 printed pages. Additional pages are added every week.

"We're really quite gratified at the response we've been getting from the public to our site," said Kelly. "Since we set up the site less than three years ago, the number of visitors per day has been climbing steadily -- and in recent months that increase has accelerated. During October, for instance, we had an average of about 1,033 visits per day. That's a 67 percent increase from September." Kelly noted that the November increase in site visits promises to be even greater.

"One of government's most important services to farmers is providing them with information," said Kelly. "Knowledge is power, and farmers are hungry for it. They have to be shrewd in business, like never before. So FSA and other USDA agencies are working to expand the information they make available on their Internet Home Pages."

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On the web site, all members of the public, including farmers, ranchers, and the news media can quickly and easily gain access to information regarding all FSA programs and activities, including:

- * Fact sheets on FSA farm loan, conservation, and commodity programs;
- * Applications for FSA programs and other forms;
- * FSA news releases;
- * Locations and phone numbers of State and County FSA offices;
- * FSA-related Federal Register documents and legislation;
- * Statistics regarding agricultural commodities, prices, and production; FSA Production Flexibility Contracts, and Conservation Reserve acreages and payments;
- * Information on requesting Agency documents under the Freedom of Information Act;
- * Employment opportunities with the Agency;
- * Information regarding FSA emergency assistance programs.

FSA also sends copies of its press releases via E-Mail to members of a subscription list. Subscriptions are free, and interested parties can sign up from the web site.

"The fact is that 31 percent of the nation's farmers own or lease computers, and 20 percent of these utilize computers in their day-to-day farm operations," said Kelly. "In today's fast-paced times, it is ever more imperative to get the information to those who need it, *when* they need it. The FSA Web Site plays an increasingly important role in accomplishing this."

Said Kelly, "We're keeping on top of this exciting technology, and as new capabilities become available, we're going to be incorporating them. Our goal is to make access to information as quick, convenient, and easy as possible. The American people deserve nothing less."

The address of the Farm Service Agency home web page is
<http://www.fsa.usda.gov>